FRESHWATER SYSTEMS · FISHERIES MONITORING

Catch Assessment Survey of Lake Victoria

Catch rates, landings, species composition and population structure from the October 2025 and January 2026 surveys, generating the indicators needed to manage Kenya's Lake Victoria fishery.

REFERENCE	ISSUED	REGION
C82_4(1)	**June 2026**	**Kenyan Lake Victoria**

FRESHWATER SYSTEMS

19,786 t
total landings, October 2025 survey

KES 3.17 B
beach value of the October 2025 catch

80%
of landings came from Homa Bay County

37.3 cm
mean Nile perch length, below the 50 cm slot

Background

Catch Assessment Surveys (CAS) generate the core indicators of a fishery, including catch per unit effort, catch volume, catch value and fishing effort, that underpin development planning, policy formulation and effective fisheries management. Lake Victoria, the largest lake in Africa with a surface area of 68,800 km², is shared by Kenya (6% of the surface), Tanzania (51%) and Uganda (43%), and its fishery is a major source of high-protein food, employment and foreign exchange for the partner states.

Methods

The CAS was conducted in October 2025 and January 2026 using the electronic CAS (eCAS) system at 20 landing sites, following the harmonized LVFO Standard Operating Procedures of 2019. The two-stage stratified design sampled 10% of landing sites as primary units and, within each, craft and gear combinations as secondary units across 16 effort groups. The design accounted for moon phases, since the dagaa fishery operates during the dark phases of the moon. Mean catch rates, total catches, beach values and the population structure of Nile perch and tilapiines were estimated.

Key Findings

Landings, value and where they come from

Total landings were 19,786.3 ± 229 t in October 2025, valued at KES 3,170,037,500, and 11,185 ± 48 t in January 2026. Dagaa and haplochromines dominated in October at 41.2% and 41.0% respectively, with Nile perch at 14.7%. In January, dagaa led at 38%, followed by Nile perch (22%), tilapia (19%) and haplochromines (15%). Small seines landed most of the catch (15,677 t or 79.2% in October, and 58% in January), while Sesse motorized and sail boats landed 93% of the October catch by craft type.

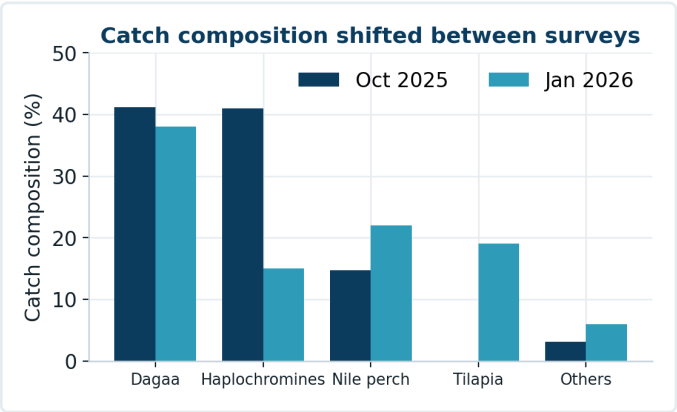


Figure 1. Species composition shifted between the wet- and dry-season surveys, with dagaa consistently dominant.

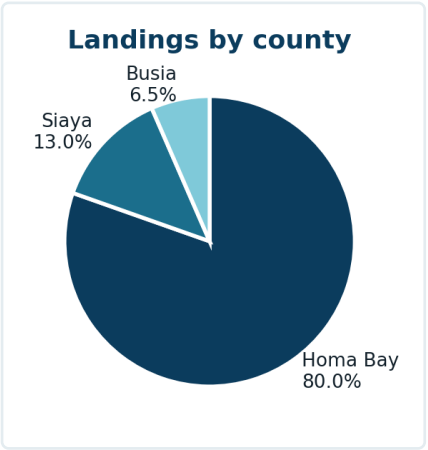


Figure 2. Homa Bay County accounted for the great majority of landings in both surveys.

Effort, value and a population warning

Motorized Sesse boats (SMS) using small seines achieved the highest dagaa catch rate at 254.5 kg boat^{-1} day^{-1}, and motorization sharply raised Nile perch returns, from 5.6 kg boat^{-1} day^{-1} for paddle craft with gillnets to 38.9 for motorized craft with longlines. Nile perch remained the most valuable species at KES 298 kg^{-1}, ahead of tilapia at 274.30 and dagaa at 70.60. Critically, the mean Nile perch length was 37.3 ± 2.2 cm, below the 50 cm slot size, and illegal or modified gears (beach and boat seines, undersized gillnets, monofilaments and small hooks) remain widespread.

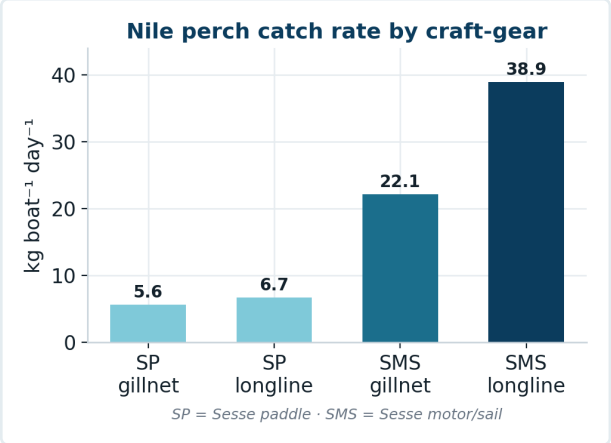


Figure 3. Nile perch catch rates rise steeply with motorization (SMS) over paddle craft (SP).

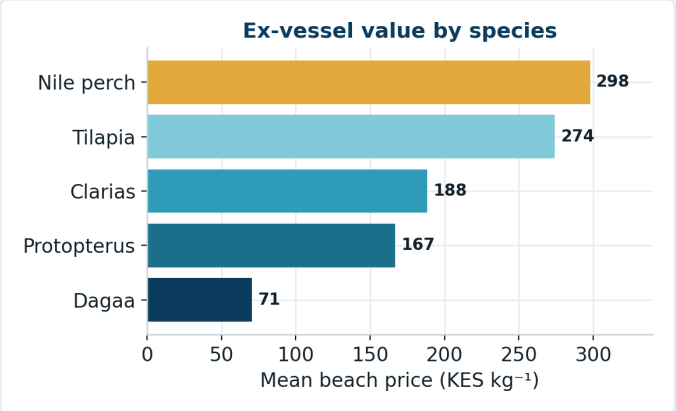


Figure 4. Nile perch and tilapia command the highest beach prices; dagaa the lowest, signalling a value-addition opportunity.

Conclusions

- Catch rates and estimates are fluctuating and generally declining across most effort groups, with a few exceptions in the tilapiine fishery.
- Illegal and modified gears remain rampant, and small hooks targeting immature Nile perch are a major factor depressing the stock.
- Most Nile perch landed are below the legal slot size, while dagaa's low price points to a clear case for value addition.

Recommendations

1. Intensify management of small-size catches, and amend fisheries law to allow confiscation of illegal gear at the points of import, manufacture, transport, sale and use.

2. Secure consistent, long-term CAS funding and data collection independent of donor projects.
3. Step up removal of destructive gears, involving BMUs, and strengthen monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS).
4. Lower fishing effort for tilapia and Nile perch, and impose gear limits to protect juveniles and habitat.
5. Promote value addition in the dagaa food chain to raise its economic returns.

Authors: Owili, M., Nyamweya, C., Nyaboke, H., Mrombo, N., Githukia, C., Fonda, J., Ogwai, C., Last, J., Gichuru, N., Basweti, G., Guya, F., Ongore, C., Owiti, H., Otuo, P., Nyaundi, J., Mziri, V. & Aura, C.

KMFRI Headquarters
P.O. Box 81651-80100, Mombasa
Tel: +254 (041) 475151/4
director@kmfri.go.ke

KMFRI Kisumu Centre
P.O. Box 1881-40100, Kisumu
Tel: +254 (0)770 567 443
kisumucentre@kmfri.go.ke

Online
www.kmfri.go.ke
ISO 9001:2015 Certified
Freshwater Systems Directorate

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